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School District Top Administrators & Ironbound Residents Ask the City to Reserve Land for Schools

Ironbound residents packed the Central Planning Board meeting on Dec. 4, 2000, to ask that two vacant and underutilized sites, identified by the community as



Oliver Street School in the Ironbound

good sites for new schools, be reserved now for public use in the City's Official Map. Block 2487 (E. Ferry Street bordering Ironbound Stadium) has been discussed as a possible site for East Side High School, and Block 922

Top officials from the Newark Public Schools were present, including Anzella Neims, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, and Dr. Raymond Lindgren, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, made a presentation on behalf of the District. The District also asked the Central Planning Board to recommend that the City Council pass an immediate ordinance reserving land for schools on the City's Official Map.

Ken Zimmerman, a lawyer from the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, described the mapping mechanism which exists under Municipal Land Use Law as a way to reserve land, without condemnation, which is fair to property owners, and yet holds development for one year. That time can then be used to make final decisions and acquire much needed land for schools.

Large groups of parents and students from Oliver St. School, South St. School, and Ironbound Children's Center, were among those who attended the Planning Board Meeting. Parent representatives from Oliver St. School carried a petition which contained hundreds of names of other parents, who could not attend. Clergy from St. James Church, St. Stephen's United Church of Christ, and the Grace Lutheran Community were present representing their congregations. Residents from other parts of the city, North, South, Central and West Wards were also in at-

tendance.

In spite of about 2 hours of testimony by the District and the community, the Planning Board approved the subdivision application for Block 2847, paving the way for development application from the owner, Jerry Rubin, from RAR Development Co.

The application for Block 922 by Sumo Enterprises to build a 54 unit apartment building, at McWhorter & Vesey Sts., was not heard. Instead, lawyers for both sides made arguments as to why or why not the Planning Board

should hear the application. Similar applications have been approved twice by the Planning Board, taken to court by SPARK, where a Judge has ruled in favor of the community.

Ironbound schools are 62% over capacity on average. One school is 200% over capacity. Over 1100 new homes have been built in the Ironbound in the last 5 years, exacerbating a range of problems in the neighborhood, including traffic and parking problems, lack of open and recreational space, as well as school overcrowding.